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UNIVERSAL CONGRESS ON THE PANAMA CANAL

France, Panama and United States of America: draft resolution

The General Assembly,

Having considered the item entitled "Universal Congress on the Panama Canal",

Recalling its resolutions 49/28 of 6 December 1994 on the law of the sea, 49/99 of 19 December 1994 on international trade and development and 49/131 of 19 December 1994 declaring 1998 International Year of the Ocean, and resolutions 2.5 of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and 1994/48 of the Economic and Social Council of 29 July 1994 on the International Year of the Ocean,

Bearing in mind that on 7 September 1977 Mr. Jimmy Carter, President of the United States of America, and General Omar Torrijos, Head of Government of the Republic of Panama, signed in Washington, D.C. the Treaty concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal and the Panama Canal Treaty, known as the "Torrijos-Carter Treaties", which stipulate that, at noon on 31 December 1999, the Canal, including all improvements, is to come under the control of the Republic of Panama, which shall assume total responsibility for its management, operation and maintenance,

Emphasizing the significance of the Washington Declaration, signed on 7 September 1977 by the Heads of State, Heads of Government and representatives of the American Republics, which recognizes "the importance for the hemisphere, for trade and for world shipping of agreements designed to ensure the accessibility and continued neutrality of the Panama Canal",

Welcoming the plans of the Government of Panama to hold a Universal Congress on the Panama Canal in September 1997, with the participation of

Governments, international bodies, public and private academic institutions, maritime users and international shipping companies, to examine jointly the role which the Panama Canal should play in the twenty-first century,

Underlining the fact that the Congrès International d'études du Canal Interocéanique was convened by the Société de Géographie de Paris, met from 15 to 29 May 1879 in Paris, under the Presidency of Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, builder of the Suez Canal, and culminated in the resolution that the Canal should be built along the route traced between the Gulf of Limón on the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Panama on the Pacific Ocean,

Cognizant of the fact that, in keeping with the spirit of a new global alliance for sustainable development, it is necessary to formulate a balanced, integrated approach to environmental, trade and development issues,

Convinced, therefore, that the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal will promote international cooperation towards ensuring an orderly, sustainable development of the uses and resources of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the rational exploitation and development of the Canal basin and coastal areas, bearing in mind that Panama's coastline on the two oceans stretches for 2,988.3 kilometres in all, of which 1,700.6 are on the Pacific Ocean and 1,287.7 are on the Caribbean Sea,

Noting with appreciation the progress of the Tripartite Commission, consisting of the Republic of Panama, the United States of America and Japan, in the plans for the construction in the Isthmus of Panama of a sealevel canal or the increase in the capacity of the present lock canal,

Reaffirming its resolution 31/142 of 17 December 1976, on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Amphictyonic Congress of Panama, in which it recalled that Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, referred on several occasions to the need for a possible opening of a canal in Panama, which "will shorten distances throughout the world, strengthen commercial ties" between the continents and promote the exchange of products "from the four corners of the globe",

Noting with satisfaction that, by its resolution 49/131 of 19 December 1994, the General Assembly proclaimed 1998 International Year of the Ocean, during which year the Lisbon World Exposition is to be held,

Emphasizing that the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal has among its priority aims the promotion of international cooperation with a view to achieving an orderly, sustainable development of the uses and resources of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,

1. Supports the initiative of the Government of Panama in convening the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, with the participation of Governments, international bodies, public and private academic institutions, maritime users and international shipping companies, to examine jointly the role which the Panama Canal should play in the twenty-first century;

2. Requests Member States to assist generously in this undertaking;

3. Urges the competent organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Maritime Organization, to study the possibility of providing assistance for the organization of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal from within existing resources;

4. Emphasizes the importance of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal and expresses the hope that its results will contribute to the growth of world trade and to sustained economic growth and sustainable development throughout the world;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

6. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session an item entitled "Universal Congress on the Panama Canal".